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**Subject:** NEWS UPDATES: National Academies Announce New Committee To Review EPA IRIS Program (Risk Policy Report)  
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## National Academies Announce New Committee To Review EPA IRIS Program

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The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has announced the members of a new committee that will over the next two years review EPA's influential but often controversial toxicological assessment program, the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS).

The committee and its charge stem from a congressional request following a critical review by another NAS committee of EPA's draft IRIS assessment of formaldehyde, released last spring. While the review questioned some of the agency's carcinogenicity findings, its authors also wrote an additional chapter with pointed recommendations for the agency's overall IRIS program and approach to toxicological assessments.

Following up on the report, Congress attached language to EPA's fiscal year 2012 budget requesting, among other things, that the agency submit up to three of the IRIS assessments released in 2012 to NAS review, with one of the three being its assessment of arsenic. NAS staff, however, successfully requested that congressional leadership allow them to perform an in-depth review of the IRIS program in addition to reviewing just the arsenic assessment.

NAS announced the provisional members of the committee June 18. The members of an NAS committee are provisional during the first 20 days after they have been announced, when NAS will accept comments on the membership. The comments will be considered before the membership is finalized, according to NAS' website.

Of the 16 provisional members, three -- Jonathan Samet, David Dorman and Yiliang Zhu -- also served on the formaldehyde committee. Samet, who will chair the new committee, also chaired the NAS formaldehyde committee. Most of the members are professors, with the exception of an Argonne National Laboratory scientist, a think tank academic and a California state regulator. The last, Lauren Zeise, has served on several previous NAS panels, including the committee that wrote "Science and Decisions: Advancing Risk Assessment." The 2009 report suggested numerous changes to EPA risk assessment practice intended to increase its utility.

IRIS staff have already sought to respond to some of the recommendations in the formaldehyde report. Reports released this calendar year have been edited in accordance with the committee's recommendations to make them shorter and clearer, including a new preamble that summarizes the report's conclusions and how they were reached. The agency has also created a new standing panel of its Science Advisory Board (SAB) to review new IRIS assessments.

SAB staff are in the process of selecting experts who will serve on the new Chemical Assessment Advisory

Committee (CAAC). The Center for Progressive Reform (CPR), a think tank in favor of strict environmental regulation, sent EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson a letter June 15 protesting the number of industry scientists under consideration for membership of the new SAB panel.

"Of the 116 nominees, we count only four individuals who work for environmental [groups]," write Rena Steinzor, CPR's president, and Matthew Shudtz, senior policy analyst. "By contrast, five individuals from the Dow Chemical Company alone have been nominated, as have five other people employed by potentially regulated parties and 21 individuals whose consultancy firms stand to gain or lose significant business depending on the outcome of CAAC deliberations." *Relevant documents are available on InsideEPA.com. (Doc ID: [2402088](#))*

Steinzor and Shudtz note that "Individuals whose employers (or employers' direct competitors) are potentially regulated parties should not be invited to be committee members. It is important to recognize that IRIS profiles are not regulations. Yet, many chemical manufacturers and users see the documents as so fundamental to future regulatory action that their employees should not be put into a position where their expert advice could be tainted by a conflict of interest arising out of a duty -- be it real or perceived -- to the employer's bottom line. These experts can participate through the public review and comment process, so they need not be given special opportunities to participate through the CAAC." -- *Maria Hegstad*

Elizabeth Erwin  
National Center for Environmental Assessment  
Office of Research and Development  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Office: (703) 347-0205  
Blackberry: (b) (6)